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UNCLAS VATICAN 004202

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT PASSTO WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM -IO/ESA  
DEPT.FOR EUR/WE(VAN CLEVE), NEA/NGA, DRL/IRF

FROM EMASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO. 131/01

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREF PREL SOCI VT  
SUBJECT: VATICAN VIWS ON WCAR

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¶1. (U) CARDINAL ROGER ETCHEGARAY, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE AND MEMBER OF THE U.N.'S "EMINENT PERSONS" GROUP OF ADVISORS, SAID THE WCAR MUST BE AWARE OF THE MODERN MANIFESTATIONS OF INEQUALITY. FOLLOWING THE ROUND TABLE TALKS AT THE GENEVA OFFICES OF THE UNHCR, THE CARDINAL STATED THAT "THE ANTIRACISM OF YESTERDAY SEEMS UNSUITED TODAY AND NEEDS NOT ONLY TO REVIVE ITS PERMANENT CONVICTIONS BUT ALSO TO RENEW ITS REASONING, EVEN SOMETIMES TO CHANGE ITS TARGET." HE WARNED THAT NEW PERMUTATIONS OF RACISM MIGHT BEST BE FOUGHT BY NEW METHODS.

¶2. (SBU) POLOFF AND POL INTERN MET AUGUST 2 WITH KISHORE JAYABALAN, ASSISTANT TO FRANK DEWANE, UNDERSECRETARY OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, TO DISCUSS THE HOLY SEE'S VIEWS ON THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON RACISM. (NOTE: DEWANE WAS THE VATICAN REPRESENTATIVE AT 1ST WEEK SESSION OF WCAR IN GENEVA). THE HOLY SEE GENERALLY SHARES USG POSITIONS ON CONTROVERSIAL AREAS OF THE WCAR DOCUMENTS, SPECIFICALLY REPARATIONS FOR SLAVERY, ZIONISM AS RACISM LANGUAGE, AND "ISLAMAPHOBIA."

¶3. (SBU) LIKE THE USG, THE HOLY SEE WOULD PREFER THE WCAR TO BE A FORWARD LOOKING CONFERENCE, FOCUSING MORE ON CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS THAN APOLOGIES FOR WRONGS COMMITTED GENERATIONS AGO. THEY WOULD RATHER DISCUSS MODERN TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS THAN REPARATIONS FOR THE SLAVE TRADE FROM AFRICA - ESPECIALLY SINCE THIS IGNORES ALL OTHER SLAVE TRADES, PAST AND PRESENT. IN ADDITION, THE VATICAN HAD RESERVATIONS ON THE PARAGRAPHS DEALING WITH THE HOLOCAUST. JAYABALAN DID SAY THAT THIS WAS A MORE TIMELY

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AND RELEVANT ISSUE THAN SLAVERY REPARATIONS, AS THERE ARE LIVING HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS.

¶4. (SBU) ACCORDING TO JAYABALAN, THE HOLY SEE ALSO OBJECTED TO THE 'ZIONISM AS RACISM' LANGUAGE. CITING THE EXAMPLES OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE BALKANS, HE SAID THEY VIEW RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION AS SEPARATE AND DISTINCT FROM DISCRIMINATION BASED ON ETHNICITY OR RACE, ALTHOUGH NO LESS GRIEVOUS AN OFFENSE. A RELIGION IS A CHOICE OR A SYSTEM OF BELIEFS, NOT AN INHERITED TRAIT.

¶5. (SBU) MR. JAYABALAN THOUGHT THE WCAR DOCUMENTS LACKED A CLEAR AND CURRENT FOCUS. HE SAW THEM AS OVERLOADED WITH INDIVIDUAL PET PROJECTS, WITH NO CLEAR FOCUS OR GOAL FOR THE CONFERENCE AS A WHOLE. JAYABALAN BELIEVED THAT THESE INDIVIDUAL ISSUES, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD NOT MAKE IT PAST THE PREPCON.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: WHILE THE HOLY SEE MAY SHARE USG VIEWS ON MANY OF THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE WCAR, THEY TEND TO LIMIT ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN DEBATES TO TOPICS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO THE VATICAN, SUCH AS ABORTION. THEY CAN, HOWEVER, BE A USEFUL PARTNER BEHIND THE SCENES, ESPECIALLY WITH COUNTRIES (E.G. LIBYA, IRAQ) WITH WHICH THE USG HAS LITTLE LEVERAGE. END COMMENT. MERANTE

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